

very nature, customs, ideology and history.

15 Slowly the memories of the civil war began

727 to be forgotten and the resources of the

country were concentrated in constructive

175 work. As an independent state Finland showed

181 amazing economic and social progress. In

the thirties Finland undoubtedly was one of the

happiest countries in the world. Her living

standard rose steadily, she had become al-

most self-supporting, communism as a po-

litical party was abolished, and fascism was

too alien to the Finnish nature to become an

important political factor. At the outbreak of

World War II the unanimous desire in Finland

was to keep out of the fight. But unfortunately

175 that proved impossible. In her policy of

721 Westward expansion, Russia had long regarded

Finland as an obstacle; in turn, the Finns had

186 of sacrifice was at its height during the Finnish-Russian Winter War, when the entire outside world was expecting Finland to succumb at any moment.

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727 Since the last war there has been a change in the general attitude. The first post-war years were gloomy and full of apprehension approaching disaster, in view of what was happening to the other small nations in Europe who appeared to be mere pawns in the hands of more powerful nations. In the foreign presses the Finns were alternately praised and ridiculed. In all layers of Finnish society this unhappy period led to a materialistic viewpoint and a turning away from patriotic and nationalistic sympathies. This spiritual emptiness was especially prevalent among the university students and other young intellectuals who had been strongly

186 influenced by the former nationalistic enthusiasm
•[727] and had suffered relatively greater losses during
the war than any other group of Finns.

But in spite of this post-war pessimism they set to work energetically to pay their war indemnity to Russia, to settle their refugees and to heal their other war wounds. Today there are hardly any visible signs of the war, not even in Lappland which was completely devastated by the retreating German troops. The post-war achievements of the Finns are the more noticeable as they have been attained without any Marshall Plan Aid--although foreign loans have been available--and in the midst of inner friction and economic difficulties. The prevailing desire of the Finns is to retain their complete independence, and most Finns believe that their resolution to fight rather than to yield anything